

DAILY EXPRESS

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OPINION

A better person?

THE Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Donald Coggan, is concerned about our moral welfare. At the Lord Mayor's Banquet last night he rightly described unemployment, particularly unemployment among school leavers, as "one of our greatest enemies." He recommended that local councils and associations organise an environmental spring cleaning of our cities and countryside by jobless young people at pay slightly higher than unemployment benefit. This is good advice. But when the archbishop goes on to urge that people earning £6,000 a year should accept a 5 per cent cut and those earning over £10,000 a year a 10 per cent cut, he is undermining his own argument.

He wants to pay young people a little more over the dole money to encourage them to work rather than loaf. On the same basis he must realise that many people who are prepared to accept responsibility and work beyond normal hours do so because they are better paid.

Already heavy taxation has made Britain more egalitarian than any other country outside China. If we impose still further levelling down there will be little or no incentive to do anything.

Either you try to make people do what you think they ought or you encourage them to do what is in their interest to do. The first course is the totalitarian way — and largely unsuccessful. The second one is the free enterprise way which increases the sum total of wealth — everyone's wealth.

Dr. Coggan is right to be worried about our spiritual and material welfare. He must not fall into the trap of imagining that by imposing an unproductive equality he will produce a better human being.

Under their skin

NOTICE how Labour Ministers are trying to be very rude to Mrs. Thatcher. Not Mr. Wilson, of course; he usually pretends she isn't there. But Mr. Foot says one of her speeches was "the silliest" since Churchill in 1945. Mr. Mellish, the Chief Whip, says she would set working people's aspirations "back 50 years."

When these two gentlemen get jumpy like that it's the best recommendation that Mrs. Thatcher is doing well — getting under their thin skins.

Local democracy

THE Communists aim to take over the Labour Party. This is obvious because it is the only way they can exercise political power. When they stand as Communists they forfeit their deposits. So it ought not to be necessary for Mr. Reg Prentice to prove that members of his local constituency Labour Party at Newham North-East have broken any rules.

We don't need any lectures from pseudo-Communists about democracy. Just let's hold a poll among the electors of the constituency — the majority of whom are Labour voters — to decide whether or not they think Mr. Prentice, or anyone else, should hold his position. That's more important than what 20 or 30 entirely unrepresentative individuals may decide. This would ensure that the existing M.P. would hold his seat until the next election when, of course, he could still be defeated. It would be democracy's ultimate deterrent against the minority takeover.

Such endorsements would also apply to people like Mr. Ian Mikardo and other Left-wingers. They should not imagine that they are immune from the party democracy that they so sedulously advocate.

Talking point

Nothing happens just as one fears or hopes... Theodore Herzl

For better or for worse 2001:— This is Your Life...

By Ross Mark

WASHINGTON, Monday

HOW do the professional thinkers see the shape of our future over the next generation? To get the answer, Ross Mark hop-scotched 6,000 miles across the United States last week visiting some of the top "think tanks," the research institutes consulted by government and big business alike.

FUTURIST Herman Kahn is the genius on whom the creepy Dr. Strangelove was modelled after his books on "Thermo-nuclear War" and "Thinking The Unthinkable," with their scenarios of mega-deaths and atomic overkill.

But these days the roly-polyman describes himself as "a cheerful pessimist."

He sees the world not only skirting a final nuclear Armageddon, but all of us who live long enough, and our children, enjoying changed and better lives in the 21st century.

Dr. Kahn's Hudson Institute was dazzling with yellow sycamore and red maple leaves as he met us in one of the charming old homes that were once a retreat for wealthy alcoholics. By way of greeting he said: "My critics like to say that this place started out as an insane asylum, and still is!"

Maybe so. But at least now days it would merit the American euphemism "Happy Farm."

Dr. Kahn sees an affluent Western society in the year 2000 in which everyone's

income will be doubled in terms of purchasing power. He says: "Our children will have clean air and clean water. But since everyone will be pretty well off, unless we put aside areas for recreation, starting right now, we won't have enough of them. There will probably be huge parks privately owned, and you will have to pay to enter."

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"I think I can get you off the beheading rap, but I warned you, Kojak, to lay off the 'I love ya, baby' when you were introduced to the Queen last night"

The hopes of happiness, the threats of violence —by the experts paid to tell the world its fortune

By 1985 Japan will be the second most powerful nation economically and industrially, surpassing the Soviet Union. I think they will inevitably equip themselves with nuclear weapons and we must believe that the next century will be the American-Japanese century.

HERMAN KAHN of the Hudson Institute



Dr. KAHN

KAHN ON EUROPE: Western Europe lagging only about eight months behind economic recovery in the U.S. Even Britain and Italy will pick up. The continent to become "more and more like Finland, a client of the U.S., but adopting a double standard in judging actions by America and Russia." Doing everything to avoid a crisis. "The basic tactic is already pre-emptive surrender and preventive surrender."



Dr. FELLNER

The inflation and unemployment problems of America are rapidly coming under control and there will be an acceptable rate of inflation of about two per cent by the end of next year. This will rub off on the rest of the world unless something else goes seriously wrong.

WILLIAM FELLNER, American Enterprise Institute

So it is much harder to get into, and also it is possible to recover from much greater damage than people realise. From the think tanks are emerging startling scientific developments as well as predictions.

ENDING ageing process

At the Artificial Intelligence Centre at the Stanford Research Institute I saw the first generation of "smart machines," which, say the experts, will replace one per cent of the world's labour force now performing simple or repetitive jobs.

On voice command, one such machine picked up a bolt and nuts and bolts from a bin. Its inventor, Dr. Charles Rosen, told me: "This is the predecessor of machines that will understand and respond to flowing English speech, rather than just words or phrases. Within a year or so."

Another of the "smart machines" at Stanford is a pen that betrays forgers by flashing "true" or "forgery" on a screen. Once its electronic sensors have sampled the touch of a personal signature, it cannot be tricked by an imitator.

Also at Stanford Dr. Leonard Hayflick believes he is on the track of secrets of the living cell that can end the miseries of ageing. Experimenting with chicken embryos, Dr. Hayflick claims he has succeeded in slowing the ageing process, thus raising the promise of lifespan that could stretch for centuries. But not all the forecasts from the think tanks suggest a golden tomorrow.



The future now — A machine exists that will pick up nuts on spoken command

The System Dynamic Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology fed millions of items into computers and emerged with this warning: The world must change its ways radically in the next 25 years or face:

● DEATH for millions by starvation or drought;

● WARS over oil and other scarce commodities;

● POLITICAL upheaval in the form of internal revolution in major industrial nations;

● THE encirclement of capitalism, and perhaps its destruction.

The chief of the MIT men, Dr. Jay Forrester, warns that the size and complexity of our modern society has just about reached its limits without collapsing into anarchy. He says: "The future may

be closing in on us. Social pressures in the form of drug addiction, kidnapping, sabotage, revolution, and the returning threat of nuclear war.

"Complexity increases frustration and disenchantment," while also increasing vulnerability to either individual or organised interference.

other predictions from the think-tank men —

DR. HORST FEISTEL, at the International Business Machines' research centre: "We are working on a computer that will recognise voices, so that it will be possible for about 50 dollars to have an attachment to your telephone that will let through only the calls you want. It will solve the obscene telephone call problem for one thing!"

JOEL STUDEBAKER, Dr. Feistel's colleague: "We are producing enzymes that will make it possible in future to produce food from waste paper and oil, and possibly spit

water so that hydrogen will be released for cheap fuel."

GUSTAVE SHUBERT, vice-president of the Rand Corporation: "Nuclear war will come about only as an accident. Even tactical nuclear weapons are a deterrent."

It is now 27 years since Eric Blair, using the pen-name George Orwell, predicted a dismal world of total government. With 194 now just nine years off, not one of the futurists I spoke to this last week saw any chance of the world sliding into an Orwellian nightmare.

President of the Rand Corporation Donald Rice put it: "I get apprehensive at times, but never that dismal."

"The instruments of warfare once possessed only by armies are coming into the hands of gangs whose grievances, real or imagined, it will not be possible to satisfy."

"Already terrorists are equipping themselves with near-seeking missiles capable of destroying passenger planes. We must expect them to get some form of nuclear weapons before long."

"Also, nations themselves may use terrorists, or adopt their tactics, as a means of waging surrogate warfare against other nations."

"Conceivably, the impact could be as profound as that created by the introduction of nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles."

Much of the thinking performed by the scholars of the "think tanks" is on classified Government projects, ranging from the effects of death rays on military science to the chances of a world war over food or raw materials.

One of these, Dr. Dale Tarn, of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, and formerly an officer of the highly secret Defence Intelligence Agency, believes that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger could involve the world in a war over the Middle East.

He said: "By offering Egypt and the other Arabs expectations that cannot be fulfilled Dr. Kissinger is creating a situation that will be full of explosive frustrations in a few months. I would say that the chances of conflict in the Middle East are now high."

Here is a sampling of

Xpelair Cooker Hood in 2 sizes.

Xpelair Window/Wall Fan.

Pelican Waste Disposal Unit.

Starting a queue for the great council supershop?

HOW would you like to buy your Sunday joint from a council-run butcher shop, your bread from a municipal bakery, your three-piece from a municipal furniture showroom, your cosmetics from a council-owned chemist?

Are you attracted by the idea of selling your house through a municipal estate agent, taking your laundry to a municipally cleaner, or pottering around a municipal builder's yard for... do-it-yourself materials?

A preposterous idea, you might think. But not to the thousands of small traders in and around Birmingham. To them, it is a little piece of 1984 coming true.

For the powerful Labour-controlled West Midlands County Council, the biggest local authority outside London, is seeking the most comprehensive trading powers ever sought by a local council.

Powers

The proposals are tucked away in a portmanteau Bill which will be presented for parliamentary approval next month. They include powers to:

1 PROVIDE and maintain a bakery, butchery or cook-freeze unit and supply food prepared or produced by any such establishment.

2 GROW or otherwise produce horticultural produce.

3 MANUFACTURE and supply school furniture, school clothing, bricks, timber and joinery materials.

Robert Millar reports on a disturbing new 'package'

1 SUPPLY any university, college or school with books or other documents required.

2 SUPPLY sports equipment, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products of all kinds.

3 UNDERTAKE printing jobs on behalf of any person.

4 SUPPLY any service such as estate agency, conveyancing, dry-cleaners etc.

5 CARRY on such other commercial activities as are in the authority's opinion in the interests of the area or its inhabitants.

In face of this astonishing list, aren't the fears being expressed by the West Midlands business community completely justified. I asked Sir Stanley Yapp, a former tool-maker and now leader of the council's Labour group.

"Of course they are ridiculous," he replied. "No honest trader has anything to fear. We are not out to be empire builders. We only want the powers so that we can respond to any gaps and deficiencies in the services already provided for the community."

His soothing words didn't impress Jack Taylor, a local solicitor who is leader of the Tory Opposition. He explained:

"It is a form of creeping nationalisation. It's like giving a loaded weapon to a criminal who claims that he is only out to build up a gun collection."

Most of the proposals in the Bill command widespread

support. They include powers to run Monte Carlo type Grand Prix races through the streets of Birmingham and to control parking.

So why endanger these worth while measures by introducing such all-embracing and controversial trading powers?

"Sitting in his spacious office, surrounded by a fine lowry picture, portraits of his four children and a huge map of the area covered by the West Midlands County Council, Sir Stanley Yapp said:

"Urban areas have immensely difficult problems. Take the example of elderly people, marooned on new housing estates who can't easily get to the shops and services we all take for granted."

"We have responsibility for seeing that they do not lose out by the failure of private enterprise. If there is a need for a local chemist, we should have the power to step in and provide one."

Profit

"We should have the powers to intervene where it is necessary. Whether we ever want to use them will depend on the circumstances."

He added: "But we shouldn't countenance any project which would be run at a loss. It must at least break even. And there is no reason why they shouldn't make a profit."

Said Jack Taylor: "We have a three-fold objection to the trading provisions."

"Such activities involve the council in activities which can be carried out much

better and more efficiently by private enterprise.

"Secondly, at a time of financial stringency, it is madness even to consider extending local council activities into areas which will involve ratepayers in additional expenditure."

Finally, we oppose them on grounds of fair play. Small traders are going through hard times at the moment, without facing competition from municipal traders who are also planning authorities — and so can influence decisions in their favour."

He warned the Labour councillors that if the Tories justify their high hopes of gaining control in 1977, they will abandon any use made of the powers and seek to have them repealed.

Rates

Opposition to the council's plans also comes from the Free Enterprise Survival Campaign, supported by 30 trade and professional associations in the West Midlands.

In his bleak, functional office in the centre of the meat market, secretary Stuart Wilton explained: "We feel it is like giving the council a blank cheque."

"At the moment, traders are increased by the high level of rates. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the council will make losses on trading activities, which will put up the rates even more."

Of course, the local pressure group can't stop the Bill going to Parliament, for it has already been approved by the council. So the emphasis will switch to a national effort run by the national federations of business men.

Who will win? Sir Stanley Yapp, a serious politician not given to wild flights of fancy, was cautious.

"I expect the Bill will have received the Royal Assent by next autumn. But whether it will come through intact will depend on the view taken by the Government."